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**TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH GAUDET, CHIEF OF POLICE,  
BRIDGEPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT  
TO THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF  
H.B. 6682  
AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL**

**April 5, 2013**

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Joe Gaudett and I'm the Chief of Police in Bridgeport, and I'm here to let you know that I'm fully supportive of proposed **House Bill 6682, An Act Concerning Collaboration between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel**.

School based arrests are a problem here in our state. Far too often children are being arrested and taken out of school for minor infractions that may technically constitute disorderly conduct, breach of peace, or even assault third degree, when administrative sanctions that would keep the child in school and ensure that they continue to learn would be more appropriate.

This bill would require districts to have written formal agreements regarding the roles and responsibilities of police in schools. OPM's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee developed a model memorandum of agreement for school districts that codifies the role of police officers and school administrators when school resource officers are in their schools.

Last year, Bridgeport Police Department and the Board of Education entered into a memorandum of agreement where we laid out very clearly our goals and criteria for police and the school system to work together to make our schools safe and also reduce the number of school-based arrests. As a result of this MOA, we have reduced the arrests that take place in our schools by nearly 40 percent. I believe that effort has made the Bridgeport school system one of the safest in the state and also established it as model for collaboration.

I have the utmost confidence in my officers and our partners in the education system. At the same time, I and the superintendent must clearly define our vision and expectations when it comes to having members of my force in the Bridgeport Public Schools. The

reality is the incidents that lead to school-based arrests are fluid and volatile. That is what makes it so important to set a statewide standard where officers and educators have clear policies defined through thoughtful MOAs. And we must provide our professionals with the tools and guidance they deserve.

The second section of the bill would provide communities with better data about the number of school based arrests in each school and demographics of the children arrested. More accurate data collection in Connecticut like that outlined in this bill would allow us to know how. As you well know, accurate data are critical to effective intervention and action. Better and more complete data would inspire more widespread work and make all our efforts more effective.

I believe, as do my partners in the school system, that children belong in classrooms and not jail cells. To achieve that goal statewide, we need the collaboration of educators, law enforcement professionals and legislators.

We need this legislation to provide information and incentive to level the education playing field in every community and to give all students in Connecticut the chance to be in their classrooms, take advantage of the educational reforms that are currently under way.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

Sincerely,

Joe Gaudett  
Chief of Police